# Los Angeles Times

$2.75 DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER © 2017 WSCE MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2017 latimes.com

ANDREW HARNIK Associated Press

**MEETING IN MANILA**

White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly downplayed President Trump's encounter with controversial Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte, right. Kelly also said he doesn't follow Trump's tweets. **WORLD, A3**

# Trump seeks a new sphere of influence

'Indo-Pacific' foreign policy, though vague, is a push to embrace India, potentially to counter a rising China.

BY TRACY WILKINSON, SHASHANK BENGALI AND BRIAN BENNETT

BEIJING — As he travels across Asia, President Trump is pushing an ambitious, if still vague, new foreign policy: a "free and open Indo-Pacific" stretching from the West Coast to Japan, down through Southeast Asia to Australia, and west across another ocean to India.

Trump is seeking to link the vast Indo-Pacific — far larger than the familiar Asia-Pacific — in a conscious effort to expand America's traditional strategic interests to include India, the world's most populous democracy, as a counterweight to China, a protectionist totalitarian state, according to a senior administration official accompanying the president in Asia.

Over the last month, the head-scratching term has emerged in White House speeches, Cabinet meetings and media briefings, as well as Trump's comments and statements last week in Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing and Da Nang, Vietnam, where he told an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit audience that the city was in "the very heart of the Indo-Pacific."

Whether the shift in semantics represents a shift in strategy is less clear.

When Trump's national security advisor, H.R. McMaster, previewed the trip in Washington on Nov. 2, he claimed Trump had "placed 43 calls to Indo-Pacific leaders." McMaster then used the term eight more times, including a shout-out to Monday's meeting in the Philippines of the Assn. of Southeast Asian Nations, which does not include India.

"At the ASEAN 50th birthday party in Manila, the president will discuss how to strengthen partnerships across the Indo-Pa-

[See **Indo-Pacific,** A4]

# GOP's rush to approve young judges

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — Brett J. Talley, President Trump's nominee to be a federal judge in Alabama, has never tried a case, was unanimously rated "not qualified" by the American Bar Assn.'s judicial rating committee, has practiced law for only three years and, as a blogger last year, displayed a degree of partisanship unusual for a judicial nominee, denouncing "Hillary Rotten Clinton" and pledging support for the National Rifle Assn.

Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee, on a party-line vote, approved him for a lifetime appointment to the federal bench.

Talley, 36, is part of what Trump has called the "untold story" of his success in filling the courts with young conservatives.

"The judge story is an untold story. Nobody wants to talk about it," Trump said last month, standing alongside Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) in the White House Rose Garden. "But when you think of it, Mitch and I were saying, that has consequences 40 years out, depending on the age of the judge — but 40 years out."

Civil rights groups and liberal advocates see the mat-

[See **Judges,** A6]

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

**FIREFIGHTERS** battle a blaze in San Bernardino's Del Rosa neighborhood in 2003. The fire, which swept out of the San Gabriel Mountains, charred 121 homes.

# Many SoCal homes face a high risk of fire

## At least 550,000 are vulnerable, an analysis shows

BY DOUG SMITH AND NINA AGRAWAL

On a cataclysmic fall day in 2003, David Mead stood on the roof of his house using a garden hose to fight off an undulating river of embers that floated down his street.

When he saw the battle was lost, he jumped off and escaped in the car he had left running, just in case.

Mead's house was one of 121 destroyed in the Del Rosa neighborhood of San Bernardino when the Old fire swept out of the mountains that day.

The decimation of that 1950s tract development at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains illustrates a phenomenon that is commonplace in Southern California — neighborhoods built so close to forest and chaparral that they could fall to the kind of urban conflagration that wiped out a whole neighborhood of Santa Rosa in last month's fires.

From Ventura to San Diego, hundreds of thousands of homes — both in mountain enclaves and flatland tracts — are part of what is called the wildland-urban interface, where there is a higher risk of fire. That's because homes are close enough to wildland areas that embers from brush fires could spread to them.

For two decades state fire officials have been working to identify those vulnerable neighborhoods and tighten their defenses with fire-conscious building codes for new houses.

But these programs leave existing homes more vulnerable to fires. A Times analysis of the state's maps for the highest-risk fire areas in Southern California shows about 550,000 residences

[See **Fire risk,** A9]

# Sex allegations make Alabama race a toss-up

Days after accusations came to light, GOP Senate hopeful Moore loses lead, poll says.

BY LISA MASCARO AND DAVID LAUTER

MOBILE, Ala. — Three days after allegations of sexual misconduct with teenage girls hit Alabama's Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore, the race here has become a toss-up that threatens President Trump's agenda in Congress and has split Republicans over how far they're willing to go to save the seat from a Democrat.

The accusations that Moore, when he was in his 30s, dated teenagers and had sexual contact with a 14-year-old have created an almost existential crisis for some Republicans.

The allegations come amid a national uproar over sexual harassment by high-

BRYNN ANDERSON Associated Press

**ROY MOORE** is running for the seat vacated by Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions.

profile leaders in entertainment and business, and many GOP senators and other officials swiftly called for Moore to leave the race. Others, including White House officials and Senate leaders, have equivocated.

On Sunday, a senior White House official said Moore "has to do more explaining than he has done so far," but should be given time to do so.

[See **Moore,** A7]

GARY CORONADO Los Angeles Times

**'WE WILL NO LONGER FEEL ALONE'**

Taking a social media drive to the streets of Hollywood, the #MeToo Survivors' March gives voice to sexual assault survivors. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Death toll tops 200 in Iran quake**

Magnitude 7.2 temblor strikes along the border with Iraq. **WORLD, A4**

**Rams win their fourth straight**

Goff has a career-best 355 yards in 33-7 victory over Texans. **SPORTS, D1**

**Weather:** Low clouds. L.A. Basin: 75/57. **B6**

7 85944 00200 5

# History with an absurdist twist? They drink to that

The Clampers, a fraternal men's group, toast the offbeat in Gold Country.

BY HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS

LA PORTE, Calif. — Everyone had forgotten about the Butt Lake Dinky by the time workers in 1996 dredged up the rusty H.K. Porter steam locomotive that had been submerged in a reservoir for eight decades.

That lack of remembrance didn't sit right with the Order of E Clampus Vitus, a men's fraternal organization with chapters scattered around Gold Country. They commemorated the teeny train with a bronze plaque.

From his perch at the Plumas Club, a dive bar that serves as his chapter's de facto headquarters, Ron "Right-On" Oxley swirled a vodka and cranberry juice and tried to sum up his often misunderstood group.

"A lot of people get confused and think we're a bunch of drunkards," said the resident of Quincy, a small mining town. "We're actually a nonprofit historical organization."

America is full of memorials for epic battles and soaring monuments and somber cradles of historical figures. The men of E Clampus Vitus — a.k.a. the Clampers — don't bother with those.

"We believe in the absurd," said Gene Koen, a Clamper from Oroville.

In Truckee, the group paid homage to the Tin Can bar from the early 1900s and Dot's Place, a brothel. In Mono County, a Clampers plaque honors the Legend of June Lake Slot Machines: illegal machines said to have been tossed in the lake in the 1940s and sought by cold-water divers.

In a kind of running theme, the Clampers seem to celebrate a fair number of places overtaken, biblical-like, by water.

The group once paid tribute to the town of Prattville, whose original buildings are submerged beneath Lake Almanor. A bunch of Clampers in 1973 got a boat and chucked a plaque into the water.

[See **Clampers,** A10]